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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 CONAKRY 000362

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TREASURY FOR OFFICE OF AFRICAN NATIONS

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [ELAB](#) [PINS](#) [GV](#)

SUBJECT: WAITING GAME PARALYZES KEY INSTITUTIONS BUT MAY BE
APPROACHING AN END

REF: A. CONAKRY 342

[1](#)B. CONAKRY 333

Classified By: Political Officer Jessica Davis Ba. Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY. As all of Guinea waits for the announcement of a new cabinet, the justice system, educational institutions, Guinea's union coalition and government offices are paralyzed. That announcement is rumored to be as imminent as the evening of March 28, as some sources now contend that President Conte has signed a government list. If true, it will not come a moment too soon. After more than four weeks as Prime Minister (Ref A), Lansana Kouyate's popular credibility has begun to fray, as fingers are pointed at President Conte as an insuperable obstacle. Many were disappointed as ECOWAS envoy and former President Babangida came and left without a resolution. Frustrations are beginning to bubble up in the interior, as evidenced by protests by university students in Labe on March 26. With key union leaders in Geneva at international conferences, however, Guinea's trade unions have not mobilized to demand immediate appointments. If the announcement comes on March 28, Guinea will move quickly to assess whether the new government meets popular demands. If no announcement is forthcoming, the ship of state will continue to drift, and tensions will only rise. End Summary.

[1](#)2. (C) Information received March 28 seems to confirm that President Conte has signed a decree naming a new "government of consensus" and that the decree will be published on the evening news. If true, Guineans will be united in pouring over the new roster to determine whether it meets their demands for a break with the past and their hopes for a better future. If not, meetings held with contacts over the last few days paint a picture of gloom and concern.

Babangida Comes and Goes with No Resolution

[1](#)3. (SBU) While Guineans remain hopeful, patience appears to be nearing its end. On March 22, ECOWAS envoy and former Nigerian President Ibrahim Babangida arrived in Conakry with ECOWAS Commission President Dr. Mohamed Ibn Chambas. The ECOWAS delegation (initially expected to come a week earlier but put off due to the Wade visit) was welcomed with open arms by union, civil society, and religious leaders who believed that their presence would herald the announcement of a new government. As in his previous visit in February, Babangida called the non-governmental leaders into consultative meetings where they aired concerns and hopes that Conte would uphold his promise for a consensus

government. Our sources told us that the meetings were productive and Babangida listened attentively to their perspectives.

14. (SBU) On March 23, the ECOWAS delegation met formally with Prime Minister Kouyate and President Conte. We understand that in the meeting with Conte, only the Prime Minister, Babangida, and Chambas were present. An ECOWAS ambassador close to Chambas told the Ambassador that Conte promised to "follow the ECOWAS recommendations." Babangida was presented with honorary Guinean citizenship and a Guinean passport, but left without a concrete resolution. Taibou Diallo, a member of the union coalition Executive Committee, told Poloff that union leaders were disappointed after Babangida said, "There have been countless missions to Cote d'Ivoire and the situation is not yet solved." The union leadership admitted they were losing faith in Babangida as the "moral guarantor" of Conte's promises, as the former Nigerian president left without any resultant action or even a return date.

Bar Association Extends Strike to Protest Impunity

15. (SBU) On February 12, during the general strike, members of Guinea's Bar Association suspended their participation in court proceedings to protest the corruption and impunity in the judicial system. Representing Guinea's 200 attorneys who do not work as government prosecutors or judges, the Bar Association is one of Guinea's most influential professional organizations. Its current president, Boubakar Sow, told poloff on March 27 that the Bar Association initially launched its strike to lend support to the popular labor movement. The Bar Association made political demands from

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the beginning, accusing the Ministry of Justice, state prosecutors, and judges of deforming Guinea's judicial system and turning it into one where justice is bought and sold. Sow said that every single decision and case is impacted by corruption, ignorance of the law, and total disregard for the judicial process. He added that although it is illegal, the courts are still operating during the Bar Association strike, convicting citizens without the legal representation they are guaranteed under law. Sow said that while this is unfortunate, the sacrifice is necessary to draw attention to the compounded crisis within the legal system.

16. (SBU) After recent episodes of civil unrest, the government of Guinea promised to bring perpetrators of killings, violence, looting and property damage to justice. Sow said the investigations are farcical. While the Ministry of Justice has opened cases and investigations around the country for the June 2006 and January and February 2007 killings, it has yet to match a single individual to the "suspect x" in each of the cases. By contrast, Sow confirms that hundreds of citizens have been arrested for alleged property crimes. While some remain in custody, many were released after paying the appropriate bribe to the appropriate official. Sow maintains the national inquiry opened to investigate crimes during the strike and state of siege has done nothing to deliver justice and that the union's participation in the inquiry oversight commission caused "cold feelings" between the union coalition and the Bar Association. Sow told us that after attorneys received no response from the government to their demands on March 20, the association members, led by the young attorneys, voted overwhelmingly to continue their strike indefinitely.

Restless Students Protest in Labe

17. (SBU) Frustration with the lack of movement has bubbled

up into at least one of Guinea's schools. On March 26, student representatives from the University of Labe approached the university's director demanding better quality professors, better living conditions in the dormitories, and that university staffing to be routed through the Ministry of Labor, rather than handled by the director himself. Like university students in all regions of Guinea, the institution's approximately 3000 students began the academic year late) in November rather than October. Christmas break and the strikes in January and February left classes empty until very recently. As Labe's students began their studies, they found many of the professors to be unknowledgable and incapable of instructing them. The majority of the teachers are part-time, temporary lecturers hired by the director. The director allegedly collects 10 percent of the professors' salaries in exchange for giving them jobs. Some lecturers reportedly lack even a high school education, but were appointed professors because they are friends and distant relatives of the director. The students gave no deadline by which their demands must be met but physically harassed the director and threatened him with violence if conditions do not improve. At present, the situation is calm, and there are no immediate signs that students are organizing protests at any other institutions.

Unions Have Not Mobilized to Demand a Deadline

18. (C) In the continued waiting game, Guinea's key unions leaders, including CNTG General Secretary Rabiadou Serah Diallo and USTG General Secretary Ibrahim Fofana departed Guinea for an international labor conference in Geneva. They departed Conakry on March 24 and are scheduled to return on March 31. Union contacts told us the executive committee remains in contact with one another, although it has held no recent meetings. They said that while they have set no imminent deadlines for a new government, their membership is urging them to do so. Taibou Diallo asserted that the change process is far from over; with or without Rabiadou Diallo or Fofana present, the unions remain ready to mobilize. At the same time, Taibou conceded that any organized action would take some time to announce and carry out. She reminded Poloff that after the February 9 announcement of Eugene Camara, it was not the unions that made the call that led to some of the most violent protests that rocked Guinea.

Government Offices Continue to Hemorrhage Resources

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19. (C) As reported previously (Ref B), government offices have become the playground of ministers and their staff who are on their way out the door, and who are making a mad grab to take with them everything they can steal. Kouyate's efforts to guard state resources have made it more difficult for lower-level ministers and government officials to take money from the Central Bank. However, those closest to Conte still have unfettered access to money. Baidy Aribot, director of the Central Bank's currency exchange division, told Econoff that Moussa Solano, Minister of Territorial Administration and Decentralization, continues to collect money for himself and for Conte, at Conte's behest. Meanwhile, most ministries are only marginally functioning. Secretary General Bailo Diallo of the Ministry of Territorial

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Administration and Decentralization told Poloff that his ministry is delivering "minimum service," but that all are just waiting for the announcement of the new cabinet of ministers. When asked if he had any idea what it might come, Diallo told us, "I am far, far away from any decisions that are being made now) your guess may be better than mine." Over the last week, this sentiment has been echoed by many of

our key contacts, insiders across ministries who are now purposefully distancing themselves from present activities. Those who are usually full of information are hesitant to speak, and all contend they are playing no role in the formation of a new government.

Comment

¶10. (C) Our interlocutors have continued to repeat the refrain that they want change, but many appear lost as to next steps should President Conte not name a new government very soon. They have set no formal deadlines, and there are no protests being planned by either the unions or civil society. There is growing recognition that "Conte is the problem" and the cause of delays in naming the new government, though Prime Minister Kouyate insists that Conte is not constraining him. In a sign that the much-vaunted patience and endurance of Guineans is a thing of the past, many Guineans are already openly questioning if Kouyate is the right man for the job. With Kouyate planning to travel to Dakar for Wade's inauguration, he must quickly obtain Conte's approval of a new cabinet or leave the country chagrined as head of a non-existent government.
MCDONALD